

UNTOLD ROMANCE THAT LED TO THE DEATH OF HERMIT-SCULPTOR MENNINGER

Once Famous Artist, Who Decorated Philadelphia's City Hall, Gave Up Paris and a Life of Usefulness for the Sand Dunes of New Jersey.

Voluntary Exile Ended by His Suicide Last Week in a Mean Hut of Boards, His Only Possession of Interest Being a Picture of a Beautiful Girl.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

L. T. Menninger, a once famous sculptor, died last week by his own hand, alone and forgotten, after years of voluntary exile in a New Jersey forest. His tragic death will doubtless hide forever the secret of his mysterious exile. From the few vague hints which it has been possible to gather from his meager effects, and from random remarks let fall to neighbors in years past, it would appear that the suicide was the last and chapter of a curious romance.

The sculptor-hermit lived in a spot the most isolated conceivable, near Atco, N. J. Other artists have sought lonely, secluded places in which to live, but the last home of Menninger could be explained on no such ground.

The setting of the last scene of this sad romance and the tragedy which brought it to a close was a mean little hut of boards, hidden in the forest. The location was dismal and remote past belief. The nearest neighbors were a mile distant, and were persons with whom Menninger could have had absolutely nothing in common. He had long since given up his art, his books, even his correspondence, the last link to bind him with his friends.

For years he had never called upon a friend or received one. Of late years he had drawn more and more into himself, rarely meeting or speaking with any one. Except for the regular letters which brought his remittance from his bankers, he lived completely isolated from the world without. Left the World and His Wealth Behind.

The sculptor-hermit died at the age of 52. He was a man of education and much experience, had traveled widely, had worked long and successfully, and would be counted up to the time of his exile a man of ripe experience. He was, as the saying goes, well born, and his relatives to-day are people of wealth and refinement. During all his exile there was not the slightest suggestion of poverty. He is believed to have possessed considerable property—more than enough to supply all his wants.

For such a man to forsake a life of prominence and successful endeavor, to give up the gay life of Paris and other art centers with which he was familiar, for the barren sand dunes of New Jersey can be explained on no ordinary grounds.

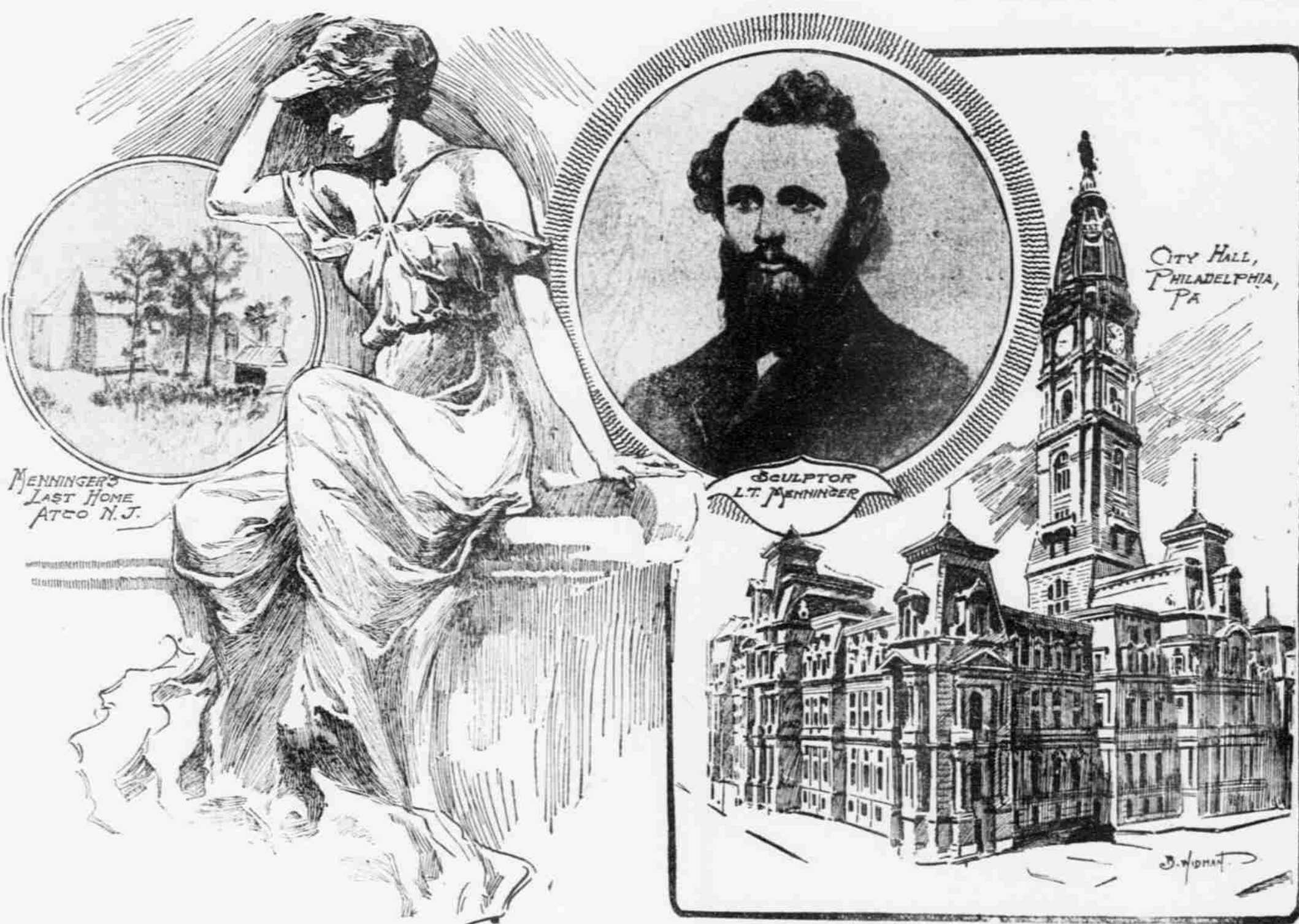
Was this voluntary exile, which closed with the tragedy of suicide, an explanation? Was it dictated by remorse or was it the result of an effort to utterly forget the past in scenes as far removed as possible from those of his former activities and successes? What meager evidence remains would point to this last explanation.

While the sculptor-hermit died alone and forgotten, much of his work is certain to live and even rank high in his profession. The younger generation of sculptors has forgotten Menninger, but a generation ago his work was famous. The greater part of it was done in Philadelphia. Some years ago, when the public building of the Quaker City was being designed, it was Menninger who was selected and intrusted with the modeling of many of the most important figures which now appear on its great facade. Philadelphia is proud of their City Hall, which they consider the finest in the world.

Heroic Figures Will Be Imitated Generations Hence.

To be chosen among many competitors to perform so important a part in decorating it was, indeed, a great honor. The heroic figures about the portals of the City Hall will doubtless be admired and imitated generations hence, when the name of their sculptor has long been forgotten.

When this work was done Menninger was still comparatively a young man; his future was still before him. With such a success already accomplished, the promise for his future was certainly brilliant. Among the scanty effects found in Menninger's little hut after his death were many letters from



prominent sculptors, all dated far back, but which showed conclusively that he was counted one of the prominent American sculptors of that day.

Some ten years ago Menninger dropped suddenly out of the artistic world, so that even his closest friends lost sight of him. He left the city and built for himself the simple little frame hut in which he has ever since lived and where he died. It is difficult to guess what attracted him to the little hamlet of Atco, unless it was the desire to escape absolutely from every suggestion of his former life. The little Jersey settlements of that section are very primitive affairs at best. Two or three trains daily are their only connection with the outside world. For such a man as Menninger there was absolutely no society, but the sculptor-hermit sought even greater isolation. He went out to what is termed, thereabouts, the New Settlement. The New

Settlement cannot be dignified by the name of a village.

A few natives have built rough one-room shanties for themselves out among the scrub oaks, which covers the sand dunes, and here they subsist by picking wild berries in season.

Board Sides Offered Only Protection From the Elements.

There is little or no pretence at farming. In such a group and removed a good mile from the nearest neighboring shanty the once famous sculptor spent the remainder of his life.

The hermit's home was only a shade more habitable than those of his neighbors. The board sides had been fitted more carefully, offering a trifle better protection from the rain and snow. As an added luxury, the sculptor has built a small "lean-to" at one

side of his hut, just large enough to hold a bed. It added a narrow alcove to the single room of his home. It was here that his body was found.

A small doghouse stood beside the house. There was no pretence of a fence or a garden. One or two dwarf pine trees nearby afforded the only shade from the blinding glare of the sun. There was not even a road leading to the house.

The interior of the hermit's house was as barren as its exterior. A rough bed in the alcove, a table, a single shelf, which held a lamp, and a chair that was all. Originally the narrow shelf had held several books, but the old man had long since lost all interest in these—perhaps it was because they, too, recalled his past life, which he was seeking to forget.

At the time of his death none of these relics remained. It had been said that he lived alone, but that is not to include his

dog, of nondescript breed, which occupied the little doghouse and was his master's sole companion for years. The dog was found watching beside the hut when the old hermit-sculptor's body was discovered.

In the early years of his exile Menninger appeared once every two weeks at the village post office for his mail. Throughout these years a registered letter containing his allowance had been sent regularly every alternate week. But of late years the old man tired of this publicity. The postmaster was obliged repeatedly to notify him of the presence of these letters. At long intervals, after much urging, the old man would appear in the village, but recently his mail had been carried to him.

Pleasant Word or Smile For Those He Met.

He never wandered far from his little hut. He would sit for hours, his dog by his

side, in the shadow of his hut, looking at the sky.

For all his lonely habits, the sculptor was popular in the country thereabouts. He had a pleasant word or smile for every one, and though he never courted society, he was never known to be morose or uncivil. Earlier in his exile he had even been friendly with a few of his neighbors.

All that was ever learned of his reasons for living in this isolated fashion has come down from the chance remarks he made at this time. Those of his neighbors who knew him before he came to live so entirely within himself recall several pictures and books of a beauty unknown in that region, and the recollection of them still remains.

The old sculptor was especially kind to children, whom he used to entertain by showing these treasures.

No neighbor who has ever visited the hermit's hut can recall that he ever re-

ferred to his past life. He would talk of anything else and seemed at all times anxious to please, but the past was evidently with him a sealed book.

The touch of luxury in the little hut, which caught every eye on entering, was a picture, hung conspicuously beside the shelf, whose brightness dominated the entire room.

The picture was executed and framed in a style never seen before in this New Jersey settlement. It was a portrait of a young woman, a face of great sweetness and beauty, with a certain air of worldliness. The looks and pictures with which Menninger had at first surrounded himself disappeared, until the little hut was barren of all decoration, but the portrait alone remained. It became dimmed and stained by time.

Past So Long Buried Seemed to Haunt Him.

Long ago it became the talk of the little community that the sweet, sad face of the picture, to which the sculptor never referred, must be closely connected with the old man's strange exile. In time this explanation came to be regularly accepted. It was said by some that the girl had posed for Menninger's best studies and had inspired his best work. A resemblance has been traced between the face and that of the figures executed by Menninger on the City Hall in Philadelphia.

It has been thought that the original of the picture had died and that the sorrow which this long ago-brought to the sculptor he lost all interest in life and turned himself in the Jersey forests to seek relief to his grief in scenes and environments. Certain it is that the picture alone remained in the little hut during long years, when every other relic of the past was worn or discarded, and after his death the portrait still remained. The truth of this strange matter, the mysterious romance, with its last tragic chapter, dies with him.

That the sculptor seemed to live so long in surroundings which would have created most people is remarkable. But the loneliness of such an existence, inevitably told upon him. With his loneliness he grew dependent and the past so long buried seemed to haunt him. To add to his troubles toward the end, he suffered acutely from an old complaint in his limbs. The neighbors diagnosed it as rheumatism. As a matter of fact, it was gout, acquired long years before by very different habits of living.

For several weeks before his death he had not been seen by any one. His remittance remained at the Post Office unclaimed for.

Neighbor Beat Down Door and Quenched the Flames.

He died as he had lived, alone, without human companionship, or sympathy. His nearest neighbor, Christian Schrengeler, noticed a dense black smoke issuing from the old sculptor's hut. He hurried to the spot and found the place on fire. There was no sign of the old man. The door, which was locked, was beaten down and the fire quenched.

The single room of the hut appeared to be empty until the alcove was searched, and here the body of the old sculptor was found, lying across his rude bed, a pistol grasped firmly in one hand, while a bullet hole in the temple told the sad story.

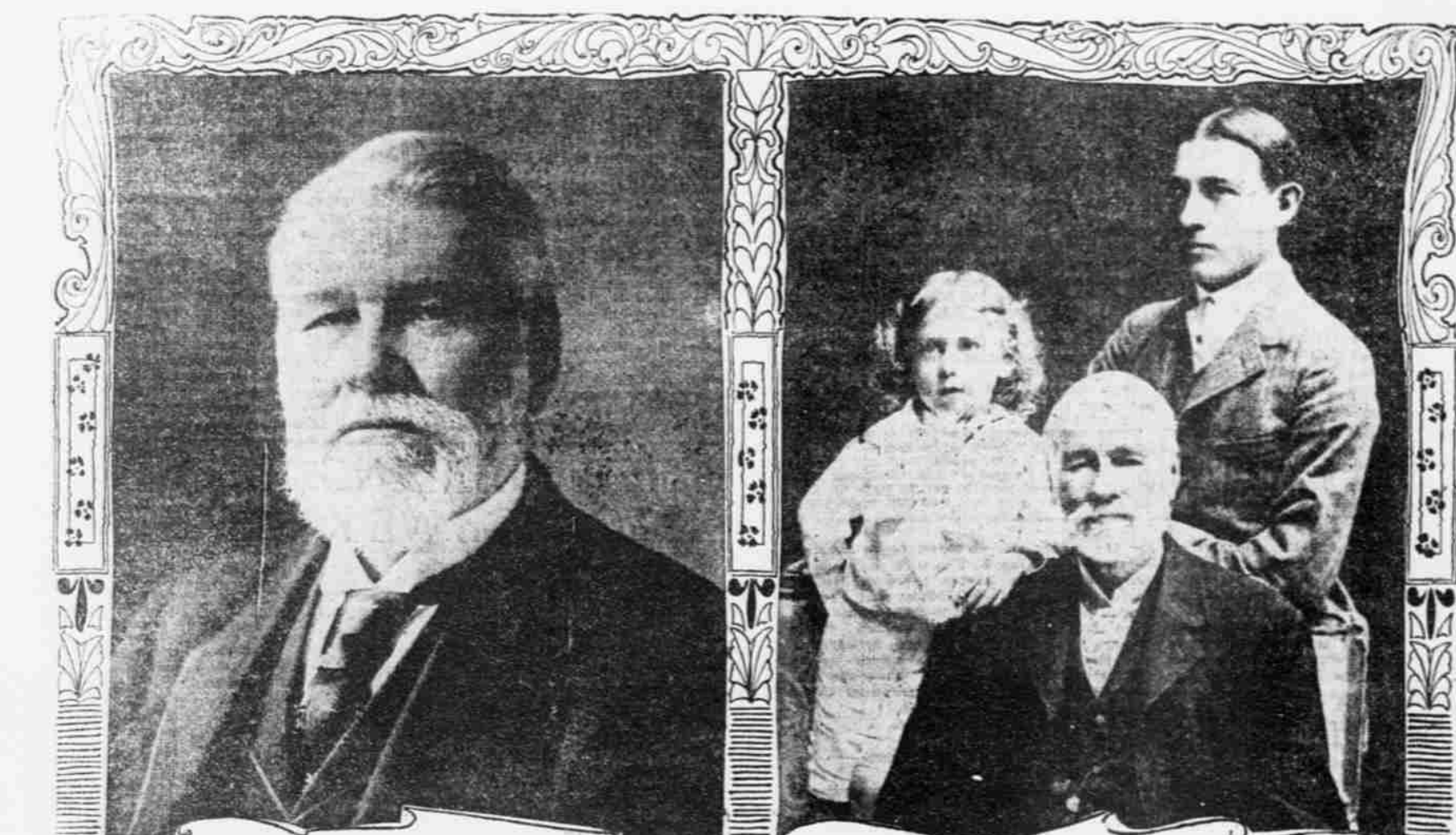
It was evident that the old man has saturated the place with coal oil before firing it. He had then locked the door from the inside, and, lying on the couch, where he had slept alone for so many years, had calmly ended his life. He left no message behind, verbal or written. He died as he had lived, alone and forgotten.

The local physician was called and notified the sculptor's relatives. His family, it was found, lived in New York in the winter, spending the summer at their country place at Haddon-on-Hudson. They responded quickly, directing that the body be prepared for burial, and a few hours later several of the family reached the little settlement.

The New Settlement had never had such visitors. The natives looked on in wonder while the ladies, in silks and jewels, walked about the crude hut and swept over the few relics of the old sculptor.

DR. GATLING'S AUTO-PLOW MAY REVOLUTIONIZE FARMING.

Originator of the Rapid-Firing Gun Has Invented a Gasoline Implement for Turning the and Saving Time and Labor.



DOCTOR RICHARD JORDAN GATLING.

Father of the famous Gatling rapid-firing gun, who has invented a machine which he claims will make plowing a pleasure.

THREE GENERATIONS OF GATLINGS.

The famous inventor, his son, Richard Henry Gatling, and his grandson, Addison Barnes Gatling.

WRITTEN FOR THE SUNDAY REPUBLIC.

From plowing to automobile seems a far cry, yet these two extremes are combined in the latest invention of Doctor R. J. Gatling, originator of the famous rapid-firing gun which bears his name.

At the age of 70, Doctor Gatling has conceived the idea of replacing farm horses with gasoline and changing the arduous of farmers' hands from calloused to chauffeur's gloves.

In other words, plowing is to be revolutionized, as was modern warfare.

Many years ago the crude tool of the plow, and that was later driven out of the field by the reaper, which, after a short, but useful career, was replaced by

the self-binding harvester. Each, in its newer and better method, cheapening the cost of producing wheat. During all this time, while the methods of harvesting the crop were being so much bettered by introducing labor-saving machinery, very little progress has been made towards cheapening the cost of preparing the land for the seed.

It has remained for Doctor Gatling to invent a motor-plow, driven by a gasoline engine of sufficient power to propel the plow at any desired depth between one and twelve inches. The truck is built similar to those trucks used with traction engines, except that the steam boiler is replaced by a strong platform on which is

placed the gasoline engine. It is connected with the traction gearing by a series of wheels; to this truck is attached a set of disc plows.

With this machine it is estimated that one man can plow from thirty to thirty-five acres in a day. To plow this number of acres in one day with the ordinary plow would require fifteen men and thirty horses.

All that is required to operate the Gatling plow is for the farmer to sit upon the cushioned seat of the truck and work the controller, which is not unlike those attached to automobiles. If he happens to be indisposed, his wife can take his place.

It is generally estimated that the cost of plowing under ordinary conditions is \$1.50 per acre, and then the further preparation of the ground by harrowing and rolling it costs another 50 cents per acre. By the process of plowing with the Gatling machine the ground becomes thoroughly pulverized and the rolling is not required. Doctor Gatling is having his plow made in St. Louis and is going to form a St. Louis company to carry on its manufacture and distribution when it is ready for the market. As yet his plans in this latter respect have not assumed definite shape. The sample plow is now nearing completion and will soon be ready for inspection.

When seen at his residence, No. 880 Lin-

coll boulevard, he requested that nothing be published about his invention until after the model has been completed. He declined to talk about the wonderful mechanism of the plow, fearing that the publication of his statements would bring numerous inquiries, which he said he would have no time to answer just now.

MISS HELEN KNEEN DEFIED LIGHTNING.

EVEN as Ajax once defied the lightning, so did Miss Helen Louise Kneen of Derby, Conn., the other day, and with equal success. How she survived the shock which caused women to faint and strong men to grow pale is still a matter of adding wonder to her friends, what the young woman laughingly treats her experience as only one of many interesting incidents in her short but bright career.

It was at the graduation exercises of the class of 1901 of the Derby High School that the thrilling incident occurred which is still the talk of that region of the "Nutmeg State."

On the stage of the Sterling Opera-house thirteen pupils had gathered to receive diplomas. The prominence of thirteen, coincident with a Friday, had not been regarded as distinctive by the many among the audience of 1,500 persons, and not a few experienced a decidedly unpleasant sensation while on the way to the opera-house as they saw black and angry clouds and heard the rumbling of distant thunder. But once inside they applauded the thirteen pupils with enthusiasm.

The first number of the programme, a chorus by a hundred school children, had just been concluded when Miss Kneen stepped forward to deliver the valedictory address. Undelayed by the rattle of celestial artillery and the vivid flashes of lightning, she began:

"The evening of the 11th of June is here, and so are we, with our decorations, our fresh white dresses, our immaculate shirt bosoms, our patent leathers. But one dreadful fear oppresses us. We are thirteen in number, here on the 11th of the month, and on a Friday, too. What dreadful thing is to befall us? Is it any wonder that we are on the pins and needles of apprehension?"

"Bang!" went a thunderclap.

Having reached her peroration, Miss Kneen had warned so impressively to her subject that she stood with uplifted hand and the words "nothing to blast" upon her lips, when the crucial test of her nerve occurred.

Life a comet in a clear sky, a ball of fire shot through an open window and for a second seemed to pause upon Miss Kneen's finger tips, while the audience sat spellbound with horror. Several pupils on the tier of seats directly behind Miss Kneen fainted.

People could not grasp the situation. All they thought was that a young girl had been struck by lightning and might die before their eyes. Women fainted on the stage, terror-stricken beyond the power of action.

For her coolness in the trying situation there would have been a panic in the hall.

"Frightened?" said she when questioned, "not in the least. I didn't have time to be. But I conquered the hoodoo, and I am satisfied."

CURIOUS INSTRUMENT MADE BY A MECHANIC.

Few men who deal in science from the abstract standpoint ever evolve anything practical from their theories, but Professor Ogden Road has proved an exception.

An Eastern mechanic has constructed, upon the professor's suggestion, a musical instrument of a decidedly novel description. Until informed no one would ever recognize the apparatus. It is part of the chandelier in the owner's drawing-room. The basis of the instrument is the so-called musical flame. When gas is burned in a cylindrical chimney of a certain length and width it produces a musical note. According to the angle at which the vapor is emitted from the jet, there will be either a sound or silence. A simple contrivance enables the owner by touching a button to change the flame from musical to non-musical at will. There are thirty lamps in his chandelier so arranged as to make four octaves. The keyboard is in a corner of the room.

A Seaside Episode.

Hand in hand they walked along beside the sunlit sea; They heard the wavelike summer song—A wondrous melody.

"Oh! how I love you, love," he said; "How dear you are to me!" The maiden drooped her pretty head, But not a word she said.

"Will thou be mine, my love?" he said. While grasping her soft hand; "Oh! don't make love just now," said she, "My shoes are full of sand."

—Boston Courier.

ST. LOUIS MEN IN GERMANY.



Rudolf Kolppenberg and Charles Ehlermann of St. Louis playing a whist at Koenigsberg with a German friend. Since taking the waters Mr. Kolppenberg has lost fifty pounds.